



New Mexico Coalition to
End Homelessness

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham
Office of the Governor
490 Old Santa Fe Trail Room 400
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Governor Lujan Grisham,

We, the undersigned organizations, behavioral health providers, and other professionals, represent a diverse array of interests and perspectives across New Mexico. We are united in our commitment to the well-being and safety of all New Mexicans, and our belief that true safety comes from investing in communities to meet people's needs. It is with respect and sincerity that we write to you today to urge you to reconsider the call for a special legislative session to address "public safety," as we strongly believe the legislative proposals put forth will have a detrimental impact on New Mexicans, rather than achieving the aims you seek.

It is heartbreaking that so many New Mexicans struggle to attain mental health care, addiction treatment, and affordable housing – especially the most marginalized people in our communities, including New Mexicans who are immigrants, queer, Indigenous, LGBTQ, Black and Brown. How can anyone feel safe when they do not know if they will have a roof over their heads tomorrow or how long it will take for a child grappling with a mental illness to be seen by a therapist? New Mexicans deserve better, and we must work toward solutions that invest in the long-term health, safety, and well-being of our communities. As organizations who work for and with individuals and communities most impacted by these struggles, we share the urgent desire to bring these solutions to bear.

However, with less than two weeks to go before session is slated to begin and an obvious lack of consensus between lawmakers on the (continually shifting) legislative proposals, there is simply no way to achieve the solutions New Mexicans deserve. Moreover, a special session that will conclude in a matter of days with little to no opportunities for community feedback is not conducive to passing true and lasting safety solutions.

We acknowledge that the call for a special session has ignited a much-needed conversation about mental health and public safety that has generated rich and creative ideas for addressing the complex conditions underlying the crises our communities now face. We are grateful to you for accelerating this critical dialogue, but real solutions deserve more time than we have. They also deserve more robust dialogue and partnership with community organizations like ours, which have been working diligently for years to lift us out of the crisis created by previous administrations.

Your office has rightly recognized that system-wide solutions are too complex for a short special session. But with that acknowledgement, you have elected to instead pursue approaches that,

while well-intentioned, threaten to exacerbate the very issues they aim to fix. Our topline concerns with your proposals are as follows:

- **Legislation related to civil commitment:** This legislation, which broadens the definition of “harm to self” and “harm to others” so the state can more easily force someone into a locked mental health facility, does nothing to tackle the underlying issue of critical shortages in voluntary care. Coercive treatment also threatens people’s constitutional rights, transgresses basic principles of ethical care, causes trauma, and is likely to entrench distrust in New Mexico’s systems of care.
- **Legislation related to competency:** Legislation that mandates detention and the initiation of involuntary commitment proceedings for certain individuals with mental illness in the criminal courts, strips prosecutors and judges of their ability to make discretionary, case-by-case assessments regarding an individual’s freedom. This approach undermines the careful consideration of people’s unique situations, potentially leading to unjust outcomes and causing further harm to the people you aim to help.
- **Legislation related to median safety:** Legislation that will saddle unhoused people with unpayable fines and jail time does nothing to meaningfully address pedestrian safety or solve our dearth of affordable housing and wrap-around services. At the same time, criminal records and debt will make it even more impossible for unhoused people to attain employment and housing.

As experts dedicated to advancing equity, justice, health, and community safety in New Mexico, we are ready to come to the table and collaborate. We ask that you halt the special legislative session and engage further with community experts in advance of the 2025 60-day legislative session. We commit to productive and cooperative engagement with your office and with legislative leadership so that you may return with a comprehensive plan for the 60-day session.

Thank you for your commitment to protecting New Mexicans, including some of the most vulnerable people in our community. We look forward to working together for the health and safety of all New Mexicans.

Sincerely,

American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico (ACLU-NM)
Albuquerque Healthcare for the Homeless
Blue Bird Healing
Bold Futures New Mexico
Casa de Salud
Center for Civic policy
Coalition for a Safer Albuquerque
Common Cause NM
(De)serving Life
Disability Rights New Mexico
Enrique Cardiel, MPH, Executive Director, Health Equity Council
Equality New Mexico (EQNM)
Gold Standard Forensics
Indivisible Albuquerque
Julie M. Brovko, Ph.D., LLC
Kate Nelson, FNP, La Familia Health
Kathryn Lenberg, MPH, PhD - UNM Hospital
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry - New Mexico
Naeva

National Association of Social Workers - NM
New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty
New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs
New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness
New Mexico Conference of Churches
New Mexico Criminal Defense Lawyers Association
New Mexico Dream Team
New Mexico Immigrant Law Center
New Mexico Solutions
New Mexico Working Families Party
NMCAN
Meridian Behavioral Health Inc.
Mesilla Valley Community of Hope
Molly Adler, LCSW, CST
Older Rainbow Community of Albuquerque
OLÉ
Reboot our Democracy
Santa Fe Recovery Center
Southwest Women's Law Center
Stop the War Machine
Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico
Wendy Johnson MD MPH, Family Medicine Physician